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ABSTRACT

This guide, designed for families of children with disabilities and educators in Washington state, is intended to provide a shared understanding of special education and encourage partnership for the child's benefit. Each section specifies what families and educators should expect, their responsibilities, possible questions to ask, and their differing perspectives. A summary of federal and state laws and regulations includes highlighted themes of the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Next, referral procedures are addressed and a timeline of the special education process is provided. Other sections address the following aspects of special education: evaluation; the individualized education program; special education services; placement and least restrictive environment; transition services; and procedural safeguards. Five appendices include: (1) products available from the Washington State special education office; (2) a list of acronyms; (3) definitions and resources about specific disability categories; (4) a list of Washington State resources; and (5) a list of national resources including Internet sites. (DB)

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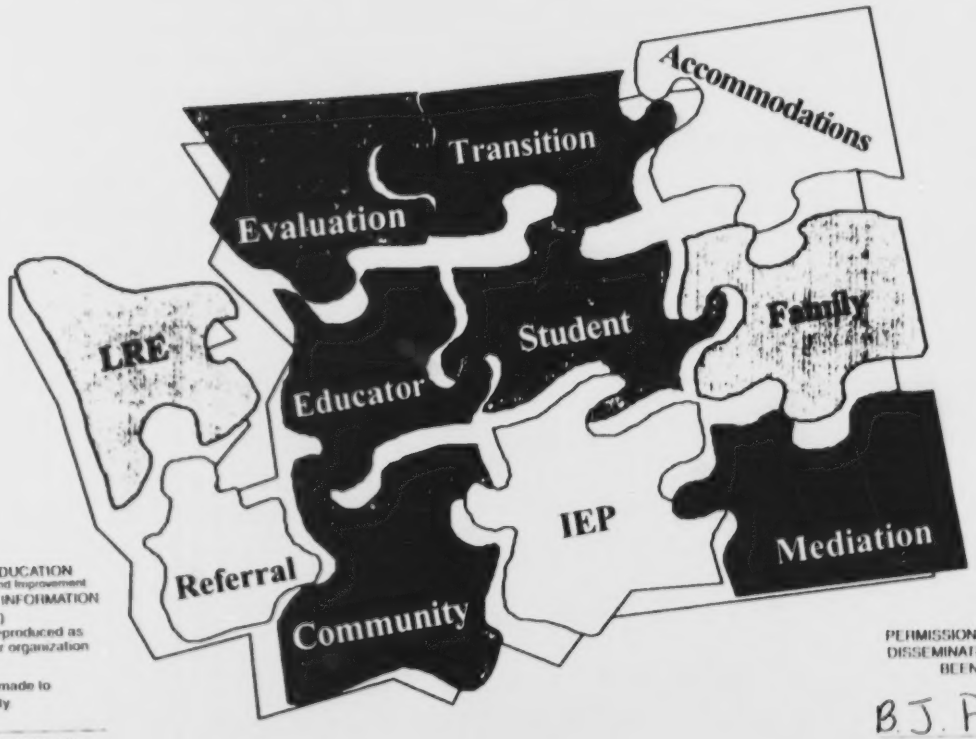

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Family/Educator Guide to Washington's Special Education Services

Revised Edition

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The special education sections at OSPI would like to acknowledge the contributions of the parents and educators throughout the state who provided their input and insight into the content of the second edition of this guide.

In particular, we thank Patty Molloy for writing and revising this document. We also thank the ARC of Washington State's Family/Educator Partnership Project current and former staff for their interest and expertise in the development and revision of this guide, including Sue Elliott, Susan Atkins, Patti Bell, Bobbie Bull, Lydia Harrison, Lance Morehouse, Linda Price, Bev Sweet, Cindy Christianson, Fran Hogan, and Monica Myers.

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We would also like to acknowledge and thank the families and educators who gave such thoughtful and insightful quotes. We wrote the guide for both families and educators; however, to align with federal language, children are referred to as students throughout, except for specific references directed to parents and families.

The guide is not a substitute for or a complete description of the *State of Washington Rules for the Provision of Special Education to Special Education Students, Chapter 392-172 Washington Administrative Code (WAC).* All laws are subject to change by legislation and by court decisions.

We intend the information to be helpful to parents and educators. It is not our intent that the guide be used as legal advice relating to any child's specific circumstance. The rules are available from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (see Appendix A), the OSPI website, or the Family/Educator Partnership Project at (888) 754-8798.

INTRODUCTION: A FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS

Amendments to federal legislation support the educational success of students with disabilities in new and significant ways. In the 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA '97), Congress states:

> "Over 20 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by—
> "Strengthening the role of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home."
> [Section 601 (5) (B)]

This revised edition of the *Family/Educator Guide to Washington's Special Education Services* incorporates the amended state and federal regulations. These changes create new opportunities for parents and educators to work together to ensure student success. By working in partnership, parents and educators can share ideas with mutual respect for each other's knowledge of the student's strengths, needs, interests, and preferences.

One of the guiding principles of family/educator partnerships is the importance of a shared vision for the student's success. From the preschool years through young adulthood, parents and educators play critical roles in helping students with disabilities identify and describe what they want to accomplish as they grow and make plans for their lives. This vision is part dream and part goal; something to aim for and yet something achievable. By embracing the student's dream, parents and educators can help the student with a disability turn that vision into an educational plan that will help the student reach his or her full potential.

Special education is a vehicle for implementing that educational plan. Every student who has a disability, whose educational performance is adversely affected by his or her disability, and needs specially designed instruction qualifies for special education. Special education guarantees each eligible student whose disability affects his or her educational performance the basic right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) designed to meet his or her unique educational needs.

This publication encourages family/educator partnerships as a way to help ensure that every student with a disability has the opportunity to learn to his or her full potential. This guide promotes shared understanding of special education among families and educators. The guide is unique in that it presents information for families and educators so each can see and learn from each other's perspective.

The guide aims to:

- Help families and educators to develop a vision for each child, gain common knowledge and understanding of the special education system, and learn ways to support students with disabilities in achieving educational success.

- Offer suggestions about how general education and special education teachers can collaborate to create family-friendly environments and promote strong communication with families.

- Share ideas about how families and educators can work together, proactively, positively, and constructively for the benefit of students with disabilities.

What Is in the Guide

This guide is organized into eight content areas:

1. Federal and State Laws and Regulations
2. Referral Procedures
3. Evaluation
4. Individualized Education Program (IEP)
5. Special Education Services
6. Placement and Least Restrictive Environment
7. Transition Services
8. Procedural Safeguards

Content areas following federal and state legislation begin with a definition and brief description. The guide then presents information about the topic from two perspectives, side-by-side: families and educators. The side-by-side information addresses two issues: "what to expect" and "questions to ask." Discussion of each topic closes with a section called "things to do together." This section includes ideas and suggestions for family/educator partnership activities.

> I ask myself, *"Is my vision for my child similar to the vision I have for my other children? Do I focus on disability-related needs or do I think about things like learning, friendships, and a sense of belonging?"*
>
> *A Parent*

FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The cornerstone federal legislation for the education of students with disabilities is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA explains how students with disabilities will access a free appropriate public education (FAPE). On June 4, 1997, Public Law 105-17, the IDEA Amendments of 1997, was signed into law. Figure 1 presents the major themes of IDEA '97.

At the state level, chapter 392-172 of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) has been amended to align state regulations with changes in IDEA '97. Chapter 392-172 WAC requires that special education students are ensured access to the general education curriculum so that the students can meet the educational standards of the school district. The state's educational standards are called the essential academic learning requirements (EALRs). They embody strong academic standards and improved educational results for **all** students. Figure 2 presents a summary of education reform and accountability in Washington State.

These federal and state laws share several themes about educational success for students with disabilities:

- Parent participation in meetings and decision making plays a prominent role in increasing educational results for all students.
- High standards and access to the general education curriculum are critical for the school success of all students.
- New assessment and reporting practices will hold schools and students accountable for learning and identify areas that need improvement.

Revised Definitions

The amendments to the Washington Administrative Code change a number of definitions that support special education services.

Parent. The term "parent" as defined by WAC means a *natural or adoptive* parent, a *legal* guardian, an adult person acting *in place of* a parent (such as a grandparent or aunt), or a surrogate parent who has been appointed in accordance with WAC 392-172-308.

Surrogate Parent. The school district must assign a person to act as a surrogate for a special education student when (1) no parent can be identified, (2) after reasonable efforts the whereabouts of a parent cannot be discovered, or (3) the student is a ward of the state. The person selected as a surrogate may not have any interests that conflict with the interests of the student that he or she represents, and he or she must have knowledge and skills that ensure adequate representation of the student. A person selected as a surrogate may include but not be limited to a foster parent willing to make educational decisions on behalf of the student or an employee of a nonpublic agency that only provides

noneducational care for the student, in addition to others. DSHS caseworkers, OSPI employees, and district employees cannot act as surrogates.

Special Education Student. This term refers to any student, enrolled in school or not, who has been identified as having a disability, whose disability *adversely affects the student's educational performance,* and whose unique needs cannot be addressed exclusively through education in general classrooms with or without individual accommodations. If a student needs *only* a related service and *not* specially designed instruction, then the student is not a special education student.

Special Education. This term includes specially designed instruction and any necessary related services or accommodations provided to an eligible student at no cost to parents, in conformance with the student's individualized education program (IEP), and designed to meet the unique needs of the student. Special education is a general, overarching term used to refer to all services provided to an eligible special education student.

Specially Designed Instruction. This term means organized and planned instructional activities which adapt, as appropriate, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to the needs of the individual student so that the student can access the general curriculum and meet the educational standards that apply to all students. Specially designed instruction includes instruction conducted in classrooms, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings. It also includes physical education, but *does not include* individual accommodations within general education that alone would be sufficient and effective to meet the learning needs of the student. Specially designed instruction can be provided by qualified special education certificated staff or designed and supervised by this staff and carried out by general education certificated personnel or trained classified staff as described within the student's IEP.

Related Services. This term refers to services required to assist a special education student to benefit from special education. Related services may include transportation or other developmental, corrective, preventative, or supportive services if they are required to assist a special education student to benefit from special education.

Figure 1
IDEA 1997 Reauthorization Themes

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA) raises academic expectations for students with disabilities and strengthens linkages between special education and general education. Some major themes of the revised law include:

Providing services to young children: Part C of IDEA ensures infants and toddlers with disabilities access to early intervention services. IDEA, Section 619, provides funds to states to ensure children aged 3 through 5 with disabilities receive special education services.

Increasing access to the general curriculum: IDEA acknowledges the importance of integrating students with disabilities into the general education program. Participation in the general curriculum is enhanced through the IEP by relating a student with disabilities' education to what a nondisabled student is learning. In addition, the law promotes ways of involving general education teachers in developing, reviewing, and revising the IEP. IDEA requires that the IEP team consider all areas of disability, whether or not commonly linked to the suspected disability of each student, and develop goals and objectives tied to the student's educational needs.

Promoting higher expectations for students with disabilities and agency accountability: IDEA promotes high expectations for students with disabilities commensurate with their particular needs while ensuring meaningful and effective access to the general curriculum.

Strengthening the role of parents and fostering partnerships between parents and schools: IDEA includes several provisions aimed at promoting the involvement of parents, including that they have opportunities to participate in all meetings in which decisions will be made affecting the education of their child.

Figure 2
Summary of Education Reform and Accountability in Washington State

Three fundamental concepts underlie Washington's educational improvement plan for all students:

Essential academic learning requirements (EALRs): Washington adopted statewide academic standards for reading, writing, communication, mathematics, science, social studies (history, geography, civics, and economics), arts, and health and fitness.

Opportunity-to-learn standards: The plan focuses on what schools and educators must provide to enable all students to achieve the EALRs, including:

- Access to quality **general education** curricula and instructional materials.
- Access to support services, including special education services, free lunch programs, and behavioral support, as well as access to safe school buildings.

Assessment and accountability: To the extent possible, the assessments measure progress toward the state learning goals. Two provisions are of particular importance to special education students:

- The assessments will relate directly to the EALRs and not be biased toward persons with different learning styles, racial or ethnic backgrounds, or on the basis of gender.
- The state superintendent will consider methods to address the unique needs of special education students when developing the assessments.

For more information about Washington State's educational reform and accountability efforts, visit OSPI's website at www.k12.wa.us/reform.

Today we are all challenging a long history of prejudice and low expectations for people with disabilities. Without careful planning, nurturing, education, and support, the old attitudes will prevail by default. The safeguards of IDEA are making new kinds of lives possible for individuals like my son and all the other people he interacts with in his school and community.

A Parent

In the past, special education was characterized by alternatives to the ***general*** *education process. In the future, I believe special education will be characterized by alternatives to the* ***special*** *education process.*

Dr. Doug Gill

As a mother of a son with a disability, I have a desire to constantly be improving the system he travels through on a daily basis. I have found through listening to the people that serve him, that they have a true and abiding affection for these children. This is more than a job to them. What they need, not unlike the students, is resources. They need advocates seeking out best practices, training, materials, and support. More and more I am seeing this as the other part of my role as a parent of a disabled child. Not only do I need to be his advocate, but I need to be an advocate for the system that educates him. If I can support the system, they, in turn, will be better able to support him and all students.

A Parent

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B: Acronyms. This appendix includes a list of acronyms used in the guide or that you may find in other resources. **B1–B3**

C: Disability Categories. This appendix presents definitions and resources for further information about specific disabilities. **C1–C3**

D: Washington State Resources. This appendix includes resources that the reader may find helpful for further information **D1–D10**

E: National Resources. This appendix includes resources at the national level and Internet sites that provide resources and information about students with disabilities and their families **E1–E2**

REFERRAL PROCEDURES

A referral is a request to find out if a student has a disability and qualifies for special education services. Anyone can make a referral. A referral must be made in writing unless the individual is unable to write. Sometimes referrals come from a student, the student's family, teacher, doctor, or others concerned about the student.

When a referral is made, the district must document the referral and send written notice to the student's parent. The written notice describes the learning concern and identifies who the parent may contact at the district for more information. With the notice, the parent should receive a copy of the school district's procedural safeguards[1].

District staff study existing information and school records and may talk with others who know the student, including teachers, family, and health care providers. Input about the student at school, at home, and at play helps create a complete picture of the student's strengths and needs.

Within 25 school days, the district must determine whether the student should be evaluated for eligibility for special education services. After studying this information and within the time limit, the district sends the parent written notice of whether or not an evaluation is needed (see pp.17–18). If the district recommends an evaluation of the student, the district must get the parent's **written** consent before the evaluation begins.

If the parent does not consent to an evaluation, but the district believes the student needs to be evaluated, the district may ask the parent to participate in mediation or request a due process hearing to ask an administrative law judge to order an evaluation.

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[1]Procedural safeguards protect the parent's rights to participate meaningfully in decisions about the child's educational program. For further information on procedural safeguards, see pp. 55–62, or visit the OSPI website at www.k12.wa.us.

What to Expect

Families	Educators
Letters to read. The school district will send you a letter with information about the referral and a copy of the district's procedural safeguards. The written notice will describe the concern about your child's learning, steps that school staff are taking to gather information, and who to contact for more information. Sometimes the notice of evaluation is sent at the same time.	**A team effort.** There are often many people who know and work with the student. The district will want to be sure that all these points of view are shared and used in the referral process. Find out who is coordinating the referral (sometimes this person is called a case manager or resource coordinator) and share information about the student's learning needs. Learn about community resources so that you can share information with families (see Appendix D as a starting point).
Strong emotions. Parents often report that they feel a range of emotions—relief, fear, anger, and grief—when they learn that their child might have a disability. The child may have strong feelings, too. Parents suggest that it helps to work through their own and their child's feelings and not deny them. Talking with another parent who has a child with a disability can be a big help. Support and information help make the process go more smoothly for the whole family.	**Forms to complete.** Each district follows state guidelines to develop special education services forms that fit its needs. If you want to make a referral and are not familiar with the district's forms, the special education director, building principal, or school psychologist can help you complete them. Forms are available in alternative languages and formats on request.

What to Expect

Families	Educators
Information gathering. The school psychologist and other school staff often start the referral process with informal meetings and phone calls. Talking with the child, his or her parents, and others who know the child can ensure that school staff is aware of all the important things about the child and his or her family that might be influencing the child's learning. If the child's or parent's primary language is not English, or the child's disability prohibits him or her from understanding or hearing English, the district will translate information or provide an interpreter as needed.	**Provide samples of a student's work.** When making a referral, try to include photographs or examples of the student's work that illustrate your concern. For example, a student's daily work, recent homework, or results of a test help others understand your specific concerns about the student's learning.
Start a file. Many parents suggest starting a file at home to keep track of the information about the child's disability. (See Appendix B for commonly used terms and Appendix C for definitions of disabilities.) Also, be sure to keep a copy of all forms you complete, information you receive, and letters you write. Parents also recommend keeping notes from phone conversations about their child's disability and putting the notes in the file.	**Designate the family's contact person.** Be sure to clarify who is coordinating the referral. Make sure all participants keep the contact person informed as they complete their responsibilities. The contact person, in turn, needs to keep the family involved and informed about the process.
Share information about previous services. Do not assume that the school staff know about a special school or tutor your child may have had.	**Clarify communication limits.** Do not assume that parents know that school staff cannot communicate with doctors and other private service providers without a parent's written consent.

Questions to Ask

Families

Ask the school psychologist or your child's teacher:

Q. What specific behaviors or skills are difficult for my child?

Q. What strategies have been tried in the classroom with my child to reduce or address the problem? How have these strategies worked so far?

Q. How can I share my child's strengths and interests with you?

Q. What information will help you decide whether to evaluate my child?

Q. What options are available if my child qualifies for special education?

Q. What options are available if my child does not qualify for special education?

Educators

Ask the child's parent:

Q. What is your child's learning and behavior like at home?

Q. What are your child's strengths, interests, and delights?

Q. What learning style works best for your child?

Q. What concerns do you have about your child's learning or interactions with others?

Q. Are your child's learning difficulties relatively new, or do you see an ongoing pattern?

Q. Has your child expressed concerns about his or her learning or classroom activities?

Q. Are there other people you would like us to talk to that would help us understand your child better?

Things to Do

- Arrange to meet briefly (or talk by phone) to get to know each other. These meetings may help balance the discussion of the student's learning and give parents and educators opportunities to talk about the whole child. Parents can share information about the child at home as well as results from any testing the student has had before. When the child has received early intervention services or private tutoring, the staff that provided these services can contribute information about the student's development and learning. The psychologist or other school staff can share examples of the student's schoolwork and social behavior. For older students, a teacher who already knows the child, parents, and other family members can provide helpful insights and information.

- Involving a group of people who know and care about the student strengthens his or her education program. If the student speaks a language other than English, be sure to involve the bilingual/ESL teacher. When all team members respect and learn from each other, the team members work better together. Seek out other team members who have a positive attitude. Together, set the tone for identifying the student's learning needs and identifying the special education services that she or he may need.

- Questions about how long the process takes come from parents and educators alike. A sense of urgency often accompanies the referral. It is important to follow the timelines and keep the process moving. Yet often the answers are not simple or straightforward. It takes time to collect information and truly understand the student's learning needs. The referral process aims to balance the need for action with careful consideration of information about the student's learning abilities.

- Be patient and keep the focus on the student's learning needs. Talk about the student's strengths and capabilities as well as needs. Work hard at understanding each other's concerns and points of view. Share your hopes and fears openly. Look at the child as a person first, then as someone who may have different learning needs.

- Aim to develop a respectful relationship that draws upon each person's expertise, insights, and concern about the child. The respect and trust that is built up front may make a world of difference as families and educators go through the process together.

- Learn about training and workshops in the community that address special education topics and issues. Encourage parents, general education teachers, special education staff, and administrators to attend the sessions.

Page 15 gives an overview of the timeline for special education. Families and educators can review the timeline together to make sure everyone understands how the process will proceed and when each step will happen. This review can help set realistic expectations and clarifies questions about the process.

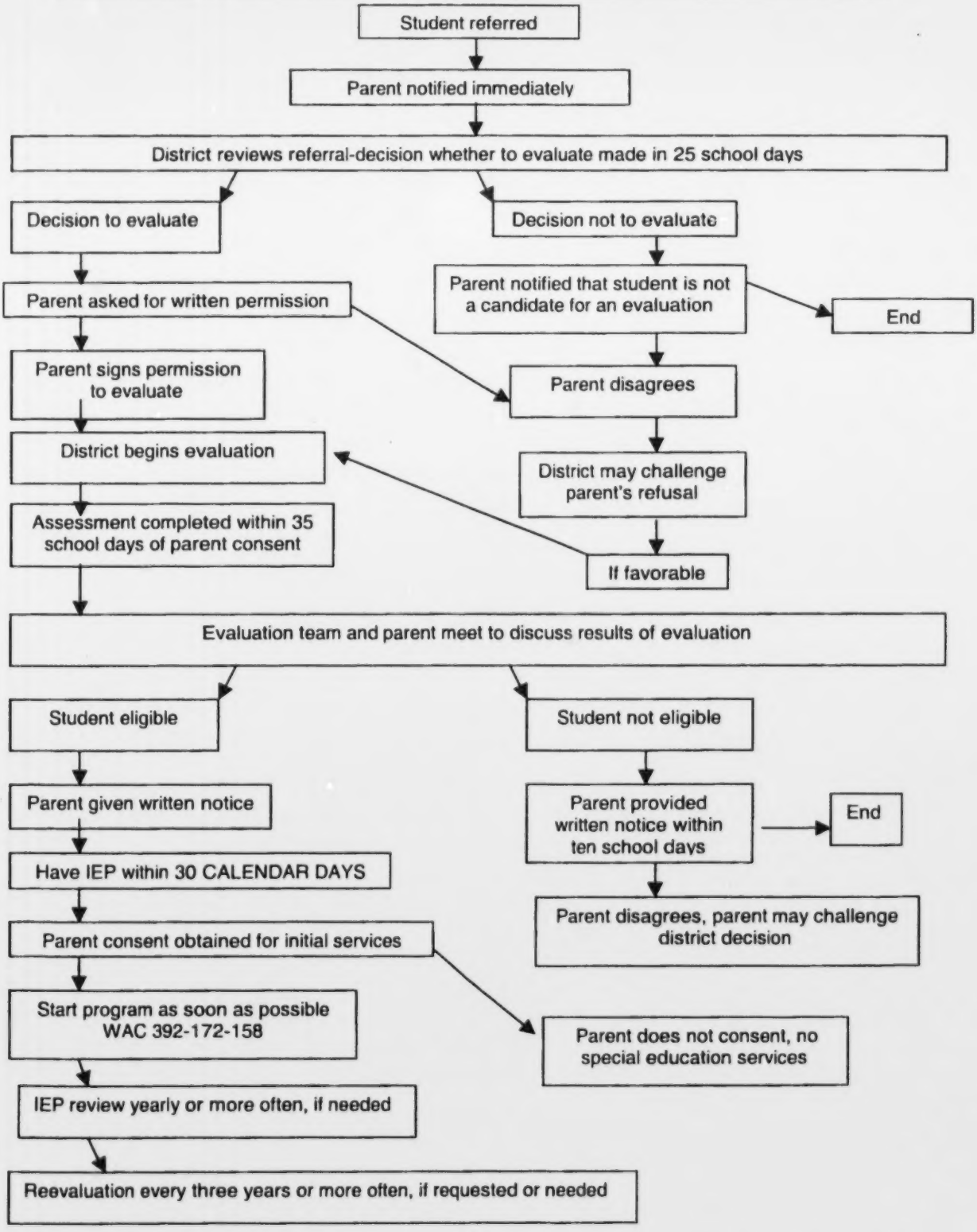
I want to make sure that my daughter's teacher knows that she doesn't have to be an expert on my child's disability to be a success as her teacher. She just needs to be a teacher who cares about all her kids. At first, I heaped lots of information about disabilities on my daughter's new teacher. I have since discovered that it is important for her teacher to see her as a kid first. To assume that what works for other kids will probably work for my daughter. Probably. Most of the time. At least start there, please.

A Parent

Sometimes, in our efforts to provide "special" services to people, we forget the ordinary things people need every day: Friends, family, interesting and fun things to do, safety and security, routine, a chance to be needed, a chance to belong.

An Educator

Timeline


Student referred
Parent notified immediately
District reviews referral-decision whether to evaluate made in 25 school days
Decision to evaluate
Decision not to evaluate
Parent asked for written permission
Parent notified that student is not a candidate for an evaluation
End
Parent signs permission to evaluate
Parent disagrees
District begins evaluation
District may challenge parent's refusal
Assessment completed within 35 school days of parent consent
If favorable
Evaluation team and parent meet to discuss results of evaluation
Student eligible
Student not eligible
Parent given written notice
Parent provided written notice within ten school days
End
Have IEP within 30 CALENDAR DAYS
Parent disagrees, parent may challenge district decision
Parent consent obtained for initial services
Start program as soon as possible WAC 392-172-158
Parent does not consent, no special education services
IEP review yearly or more often, if needed
Reevaluation every three years or more often, if requested or needed

EVALUATION

An evaluation is used to determine whether or not a student is eligible for special education services. An evaluation process is used to determine (1) if a student has a disability, (2) if the disability adversely affects the student's educational performance, and (3) if a student's unique needs cannot be addressed exclusively through education in general education classes with or without accommodations. The school district follows federal and state regulations to determine whether a student meets all three of these guidelines and, thus, is eligible for special education services. Evaluation results are used to determine the nature and extent of the student's need for specially designed instruction and, if appropriate, necessary related services.

An evaluation must be completed within 35 school days after the student's parent gives written consent for formal testing. An evaluation involves a group of qualified professionals selected by the district who are knowledgeable about the student and the area(s) of suspected disability(ies).

The composition of the evaluation group varies, depending on the student and the nature of the suspected disability. When the student's suspected disability is a learning disability, the parent and a general education teacher or preschool teacher are members of the evaluation group. For all other suspected disabilities, the parent provides information to ensure that the evaluation information is as complete as possible, but the parent is not necessarily a part of the evaluation group. Members of the evaluation group may include a school psychologist, general education teacher, preschool provider, occupational therapist, English-as-a-second language teacher, social worker, health professional, and others who know the student.

More than one test, procedure, and/or observation must be used to determine eligibility. No specific tests are required as part of the evaluation; however, the evaluation must address all areas of suspected disability and be sufficiently comprehensive so that eligibility can be determined and, if the student is eligible, an IEP can be developed. This flexibility ensures that each student will participate only in tests that are necessary to determine his or her particular disability and educational needs. An evaluation may include informal activities such as watching a student work in class, checking physical problems, talking with child care providers or early intervention staff, and conducting formal screenings of a student and his or her parent.

Students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to bias. The entire evaluation process must be culturally and ethnically appropriate, including parental contacts, testing in a student's own language unless it is clearly not feasible, and observations.

Each person involved in evaluating the student documents the findings of each test, procedure, or observation. This information provides the basis for the evaluation report. The evaluation report must be comprehensive enough so that the IEP team can develop the student's IEP.

For all categories of disability, the school district involves the student's parent and the evaluation group in a meeting to review the results of the evaluation and determine eligibility.

Two additional evaluation issues are important to mention: the independent educational evaluation and reevaluation.

Independent educational evaluation. Parents may request an independent educational evaluation of their child at public expense if they disagree with the district's evaluation results. The district must either initiate a hearing within 15 calendar days after receiving the request or ensure that an IEE is provided at public expense, unless the district demonstrates in a due process hearing that the evaluation obtained by the parent did not meet agency criteria.

Refer to the district's procedural safeguards notice for further details. Parents may always obtain their own independent evaluation, at private expense. The IEP team or evaluation group must consider the results of independent evaluations if they meet district criteria.

Reevaluation. The district will reevaluate the student every three years or sooner if conditions warrant or if the parents or the student's teacher request reevaluation. The same rules that apply to initial evaluations apply to reevaluations. Districts must get written parental consent for reevaluation with certain exceptions. Parent consent is not required before reviewing existing data as part of the evaluation. If the district has taken reasonable measures to obtain consent and the parent has failed to respond, the district may proceed with the reevaluation without written parental consent. Refer to the procedural safeguards notice on file with your school district for further details.

What to Expect

Families	Educators
Forms to complete. You will receive forms asking for your written consent to test your child. Your consent is required before the initial evaluation starts. You have the right to withdraw consent at any time. Be aware that the district has an obligation to evaluate special education services if they believe the student requires services.	**Participate in the evaluation.** General education teachers provide important insights about curriculum and instruction and the student's learning and interaction with peers at school. IDEA requires greater involvement of general education teachers than in the past, especially when the student is or might be participating in the general education classroom.
Purpose of the evaluation. The evaluation will determine if your child has a disability that affects his or her learning and requires specially designed instruction. The results will help the evaluation group learn what your child does well, how he or she learns best, and whether your child needs specially designed instruction and any related services.	**Evaluation reports.** Each person who helps evaluate a student must document his or her findings and contribute to the evaluation report.
Share developmental history. Your child's developmental history is an important source of information for the evaluation. Sometimes the school staff also need to ask specific questions about pregnancy and delivery. In some situations, this information is critical to determine the child's disability. The school staff appreciate your willingness to share as much information as possible.	**Use a sensitive approach.** Be sensitive to the parent's level of comfort when gathering personal information. For example, sharing information about pregnancy and delivery is sometimes embarrassing for parents, particularly those from traditional ethnic backgrounds or some recent immigrants. Similarly, questions about marital and family relationships should be asked with sensitivity.

What to Expect

Families	Educators
Get to know your rights. As the parent of a child with a disability, it helps to become familiar with state and federal laws that protect your child's right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Information about your rights is available from OSPI (see Appendix A). Publications are available in alternative formats and languages, on request.	**Be responsive.** Anxiety and other emotions are common responses as parents wait to learn about evaluation results. Set a date when parents can expect to hear from you. Call on that date, even if results are not available, or send an e-mail or note and give them an update.
Your child may work with many new people. An evaluation gathers a wide range of information about your child, including cognitive (e.g., thinking, memory, or judgment skills), physical, emotional, and behavioral data. Often a number of professionals with specialized skills collect information. Thus, your child may meet and work with many new people over a relatively short time.	**Avoid cultural bias.** It is important to consider the student's cultural background when giving tests. Make sure the individuals giving the tests not only have expertise about the disability, but also have experience working with students who are culturally and ethnically diverse.

Questions to Ask

Families	Educators
Q. What can my child expect during the evaluation?	**Q.** Do you have any concerns about the school's plans to test your child?
Q. Are there ways that I can help my child prepare for the evaluation?	**Q.** Has your child had medical, educational, or other tests in the past that the group should be aware of?
Q. How can I contribute to the evaluation process?	**Q.** In what way would you like us to share evaluation results with you?
Q. What tests and observations do you plan to use during the evaluation?	**Q.** Have we covered all your areas of concern?
Q. When can I expect to learn about the evaluation results?	**Q.** How do the evaluation results fit with what you know about your child?
Q. May I review the evaluation results before our meeting so that I can prepare questions?	
Q. Will there be someone available to explain the evaluation results to me if I have questions?	

As a general education teacher, I've found that participation with a group of qualified professionals is a great way for getting the whole picture of a child's learning: What's been tried before, what works—and what doesn't.

An Educator

Things to Do Together

Evaluation results help determine the presence or absence of a disability and the need for special education services. However, this information is only part of the picture. The shared knowledge of parents, classroom teachers, and education specialists is an important dimension of the evaluation. When the evaluation is a thoughtful and deliberate process, shared understanding of the student's strengths and needs emerges. This shared understanding is the goal of the evaluation. Here are some ideas about how to develop this shared understanding.

- The evaluation presents an important opportunity to exchange information between family and educators to really get to know the child and understand her or his learning needs. Sharing information thoughtfully and openly may make a big difference in accurately identifying the child's learning needs.

- Share insights about how the child functions in his or her own cultural group compared with siblings and same-age neighbors, cousins, etc. Discuss what the child is expected to do at a given age in his or her cultural group to better understand social and cultural expectations of the child.

- When meeting with everyone who is part of the evaluation group, ask specialists to explain their findings and reports to you. Their insights can help you better understand their perspective of the student's educational needs.

- Sometimes the results of different tests or the conclusions of different specialists may contradict with one another. When this occurs, it is important to consider all recommendations before making a decision about the student's need for special education services.

To value diversity is to build on individual strengths and gifts. Who are these people beyond their deficits? What unique talents and perspectives do they bring? Through them, we as a community learn tolerance and the ability to see beneath the surface differences. We learn the compassion needed to connect in meaningful and satisfying ways. And, best of all, we can then practice such new talents, skills, and abilities with all community members regardless of level of "differentness."

A Parent

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)

The individualized education program (IEP) is the most important tool of special education services. The IEP links findings from the evaluation (or reevaluation) with the student's learning program. The IEP is specific and tailored to each student's learning strengths and needs. It identifies how the student's disability adversely affects his or her involvement in the general curriculum and includes measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives that will enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum. It also lists the specially designed instruction and necessary related services the student will receive to advance appropriately toward the annual goals. When needed, the IEP also lists strategies, including positive behavioral interventions, language needs of students with limited English proficiency, the use of Braille, assistive technology, accommodations, or other aids and services that enable the student to receive a free appropriate public education.

IEPs must list any individual accommodations to state or districtwide assessments of student achievement that will allow the student to participate. If participation in these assessments is not appropriate, even with accommodations, the IEP will include a statement of why the assessment is not appropriate and how the district will assess the student.

Beginning at age 14, or earlier if appropriate, the IEP must include a statement of the transition service needs. Beginning at 16, or earlier if appropriate, the IEP includes needed transition services (see pp. 45–47).

Developing the IEP

The IEP team consists of the student's parent(s); a general education teacher or preschool provider of the student (if the student will or may be participating in the general education environment); a special education teacher; a representative of the school district who is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction, and who is knowledgeable about the general curriculum and the district's resources; individuals who can interpret evaluation results; and other individuals that parents or the district invites. The parents must be given the opportunity to participate; an IEP meeting can be held without the parents in attendance.

When the student is 14 years old, she or he shall be invited to attend the IEP meeting. It is increasingly common to invite the student at an even younger age to play a central and ongoing role in developing the IEP. The student's active participation in planning the IEP is particularly helpful when significant changes in the student's school experience are anticipated, such as attending a different school.

Two IEP development processes are outlined in the following paragraphs: the initial IEP meeting and the annual review.

- **The initial IEP meeting.** The IEP team meets within 30 calendar days after determining the student's eligibility for special education. The parent and school staff work together to determine a day, time, and place for the meeting.

Districts are obligated to offer a free appropriate public education (FAPE). In order for special education services to begin for the first time, the parent must give written consent. After the school receives written consent from the parent, services should start right away, even when it is midway or near the end of the school year. If the IEP team is not in agreement about the IEP, there are several options to resolve the disagreements. The team may set up another IEP meeting, or they may ask the parent to agree to mediation. If the parent does not consent, special education services will not be provided.

Annual review. IEPs must be updated at least annually. The IEP team will review the student's progress and revise the IEP as needed. The team also considers results of any reevaluation, if conducted; information about the student provided to or by the parents; the student's anticipated needs; or other matters. The IEP team may meet more often, if necessary, to address lack of progress or if evaluations show the need for additional services.

Services for the student continue during the review process. The IEP team discusses any proposed changes in services and modifies the IEP if necessary. Any decisions about changes, including refusals to make changes regarding the provision of FAPE, are given in writing to parents in a prior written notice. This notice is given after the annual review or specially arranged IEP meeting but before implementation of the change. If the IEP team is not in agreement about the IEP, it may schedule another meeting or it may conclude that the offer of FAPE is appropriate. While every effort should be made to resolve the disagreements informally, if these efforts are not successful, more formal options for resolving differences are available. (See pp. 56–57 for a description of mediation, due process, and citizen's complaints.)

Important IEP team considerations. The IEP team must consider the following: positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports if a student's behavior impedes his or her learning or the learning of others; the language needs of a student with limited English proficiency; Braille instruction and use if appropriate for a student who is blind or visually impaired; student's communication needs; and if the student requires assistive technology devices and services.

The IEP document. When completed, the IEP document will include the following information:

1. The student's present levels of educational performance, including how the student's disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum. For preschool students, the IEP will describe how the disability affects the student's participation in appropriate activities.

2. A statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives that describe how the student will be involved in and progress in the general curriculum (or, for preschool students, to participate in appropriate activities).

3. Special education and any necessary related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the student or on behalf of the student, including how much and how long services are expected to last, where and who will provide them (see pp. 35–36) so that the student can advance appropriately toward his or her annual goals.

4. A description of how the student will participate in the general education curriculum and extracurricular and other nonacademic activities. When a student cannot participate in the general curriculum, the IEP must include documentation of why such participation is not appropriate for the student.

5. A statement of how the student will participate in state or district assessments, with or without modifications. If the IEP team determines that the student will not participate in such assessments, the IEP will include a statement explaining why that assessment is not appropriate for the student and how the student will be assessed.

6. A statement of how parents will be informed of their child's progress toward annual goals and the extent to which that progress is sufficient to enable the student to achieve the goals by the end of the year. The IEP also will describe how the student's parents will be regularly informed by such means, e.g., periodic report cards. The reporting methods employed must be used at least as often as for parents of nondisabled students.

7. Beginning at age 14, or earlier if appropriate, a statement of transition service needs that focus on the student's course of study. When the student reaches age 16, or earlier if appropriate, transition services to be provided are also included in the IEP.

   Beginning at least one year before a student reaches age 18, the student must be informed of rights that will transfer to the student on reaching the age of majority and the IEP should reflect this statement (see pp. 46–47).

8. Description of positive interventions attempted by the district prior to the use of aversive interventions, if applicable. Explanations of aversive intervention safeguards, including definition, prohibited forms, conditions, and IEP requirements are described in the WACs.

9. Extended school year services, when needed (see p. 36).

Participants at the IEP meeting sign the IEP to acknowledge their role in its development.

Districts use forms to document parental consent and actions taken by the IEP team. State forms are available for districts to use or adapt to meet their needs. Use of state forms by districts is optional. Copies of the state forms are available from the OSPI website, www.k12.wa.us. Some examples of forms that are typically used are explained in the following paragraphs.

Consent for initial placement. Schools are required to obtain written parent consent prior to initial placement in special education. Consent is voluntary and schools need to explain what parents are consenting. While consent can be revoked, it doesn't undo an activity already begun.

Medicaid parental consent. Medicaid is a federal medical assistance program for low-income families. The first step in the billing process is to verify current Medicaid eligibility through the Department of Social and Health Services, which requires the release of the student's name and birth date. The district is required to obtain written parental consent for the release of this type of student information. Parents must be advised that this consent is voluntary and may be revoked at any time in the future. It is also important to note that billing for the services provided by the school district will in no way impact the quantity or quality of services provided in the community. The parental consent letter is currently available in seven languages. **The child will continue to receive services regardless of the parent's decision.**

Prior written notice. This form documents the IEP team decisions and other district decisions. It provides parents written notice of any proposals or refusals that involve identification, evaluation, placement of, or provision of FAPE to the student. This notice shall be provided to parents after a decision is made, but before the decision is implemented.

What to Expect

Families	Educators
Before the IEP Meeting	***Before the IEP Meeting***
Plan to attend the IEP meeting. If the district notifies you of an IEP date and you cannot attend, call the contact person right away. Work with them to set up a different day, time, or place. If you still cannot attend, work with the school to find other ways for you to participate, such as through conference calls. A meeting may be held without you.	**Review evaluation results.** Review the results of the evaluation before the IEP meeting. Ask questions and add your perspective to enrich the group's understanding of the student's learning needs. Be thinking of factors you need to consider before writing the IEP.
Learn about your child's disability. Make a list of questions, suggestions, concerns, and observations you want to address at the IEP meeting. The more you understand about your child's educational needs and disability before the IEP meeting, the more comfortable you'll feel at the meeting. The resources listed in this guide are a good place to start (see Appendix D).	**Call the student's parent.** If you have not met the student's parents, call them before the IEP meeting to say hello. Let them know that you will be attending the meeting too. Ask if they have any questions you might be able to answer or information you could send them. Be careful not to use professional jargon and be prepared to give examples to clarify questions and concerns.
Network with other parents. Contact other parents whose children receive special education services. Get tips from them about what to expect at the IEP meeting.	**Network with other school staff.** Contact other school staff that have worked with students with similar disabilities. Ask their advice about strategies and curriculum adaptations that the IEP team might consider for this student.
Learn about the child's daily schedule. Identify times that might work well—and not work well—for special education services. Think about the child's opportunities to learn and how to introduce services with minimal disruption to the child's schedule.	**Become acquainted with community resources.**

What to Expect

Families	Educators
During the IEP Meeting	***During the IEP Meeting***
Bring a support person. You may bring a friend or relative with you for support and to help you absorb all the information. This person may have special knowledge about your child. If you need an interpreter, request one in advance and the district will provide one.	**Be respectful of the parent.** Respect parents' expertise and let their interests and concerns influence the pace and focus of discussion. Explain information in lay terminology. Respect family culture and ask parents about their preferences.
Feel free to ask questions. During the IEP meeting, ask team members questions so that you can understand as much as possible about the special education services your child needs.	**Be sensitive to the parent.** IEP meetings can be very difficult for parents, no matter how many they have attended in the past. Sometimes test results or new information keep parents from focusing on the big picture or options for next steps. Listen to parents with empathy and watch their body language for nonverbal cues.
Plan ways to make yourself feel more comfortable. Parents frequently report that they feel overwhelmed at IEP meetings. It is normal to feel anxious or less comfortable than usual, no matter how well prepared you feel you are. If you feel yourself unable to think about all the information or want to talk with someone before making a decision, ask the team to take a short break. Use the time to release tension, talk with someone, and clarify your needs and concerns.	**Take things slowly.** Proceed gently and slowly with information, especially when disabilities emerge during kindergarten and first grade. Parents need time to let go of their dream of the "perfect child" and learn about options and next steps. Do not push for closure or too much intervention when the parent is not ready to accept it. Start with small steps and see how the student progresses. Small positive changes often help the parent accept the student's disability over time.

What to Expect

Families	Educators
Plan for ongoing communication. Talk about how you will be kept informed about your child's adjustment to new services and progress toward annual goals. Ask when you will receive progress reports and make sure this information is noted in the IEP.	**Inform the student.** Decide with the parents who will talk to the student about any changes in the school schedule, new teachers, and so forth. Talk with the parent and school staff about the words and terms everyone will agree to use with the student and what the student can expect. Discuss how the IEP will include information about the student's strengths as well as his or her disability.
Signing the IEP. You will be asked to sign the IEP, along with all IEP team members, to document your participation in the IEP meeting. Your signature is not required and does not indicate whether you agree or disagree with the IEP. Although the IEP must be revised annually, you can request an IEP meeting at any time during the school year to address lack of progress toward annual goals or to address changes in student needs.	**Continue to share information.** Touch base with IEP members to make sure new services are going smoothly and being implemented as planned. Make sure that every provider of services understands her or his responsibilities.
Keep a copy of the IEP. Keep a copy of the IEP and any notes you have in a home file. This is a very important document. You can use it to check your child's progress.	**Call the student's parent.** Arrange for a member of the IEP team to call the student's parent to share information about the student's adjustment to and progress with the new services. Ask the parent if they have any questions or concerns. Decide when you'll be in touch again for another update. If your school has e-mail and/or a website, share this information with parents, as well as places in the community where the public can access computers.

What to Expect

Families	Educators
At the Annual Review or Other Necessary Meetings	***At the Annual Review or Other Necessary Meetings***
Think about your child's future. Think about your long-term hopes and dreams for your child. Then think about specific progress that you would like your child to make this year. Share your ideas at the IEP meeting.	**Include all staff.** Be sure to gather input from all staff before an annual review of the IEP, including all support staff and teachers. For example, paraeducators are critical sources of information and should be involved with IEP meetings. Together, the staff that have worked with a particular student can identify progress and suggest new goals for the coming year. Adjustments in placement as well as services should be considered.
Bring new information. If your child has new medical or other information, plan to share it with the IEP team, if you haven't already provided it. The staff also appreciate learning about situations at home that that may affect your child's learning.	**Share positive comments.** Parents appreciate notes and/or other communications from school staff. Positive observations and tips for enhancing activities between home and school are usually greatly appreciated.

Questions to Ask

Families	Educators
During the IEP Meeting	***During the IEP Meeting***
Q. How well does information from the evaluation fit with my child's everyday performance and behavior?	**Q.** Does the information from the evaluation describe the student accurately? Is there another view of the student you would like to share?
Q. How will my child participate in the general education curricula?	**Q.** What skills or behaviors would you like the student to learn during the coming year?
Q. What will a typical day look like for my child? What opportunities will my child have to participate in extracurricular activities?	
Q. How much time will my child spend in the general education classroom? (Will my child attend the neighborhood school?)	
Q. Are the goals realistic and meaningful for my child?	**Q.** Does the IEP reflect how the student will participate in the general education curricula?
Q. How are the essential academic learning requirements reflected in my child's IEP?	**Q.** Is it clear who is responsible for delivering each service listed in the IEP?
Q. Do the objectives describe the steps that my child will take to accomplish the goals?	**Q.** Are services coordinated so that there is a smooth flow to the student's day and week?
Q. Are all services included in the IEP?	

Questions to Ask

Families	Educators
Q. What progress has my child made toward last year's annual goals?	**Q.** How do the student's goals and objectives reflect the state essential academic learning requirements?
Q. What new skills and information are appropriate for my child to learn this coming year?	**Q.** How does the student's IEP include her or him in the school community?
Q. Do the new goals and objectives require changes in my child's placement and/or services?	**Q.** Do the new goals and objectives require changes in the student's placement and/or services?

Things to Do Together

Improving educational results is an essential element of IDEA. The IEP spells out how students with disabilities have meaningful opportunities to increase their educational success. Here are some tips for developing an effective IEP:

- Read the district's procedures for special education. Ask the psychologist or special education director questions so that you understand as much as possible about special education services that the student may receive.

- Keep the focus on the child and developing the most appropriate IEP for him or her. Talk about how the child can be a full participant in class, the school, and the community. Develop and share a vision for the child so that everyone who works with the child understands the big picture.

- Discuss how the student will access the essential academic learning requirements. If appropriate, reflect the EALRs in the student's annual goals and objectives. Involve the district's curriculum director to get ideas about adapting or using curricula from other grade levels for the student.

- Listen openly to each other and learn about each other's experiences and ideas concerning the child. All participants need to know their opinions and concerns count and are considered.

- Explore a range of options before deciding the student's educational program. Agree to try some strategies and change them if they do not work. Brainstorm and problem solve together when it is difficult to see solutions or good options. Sometimes it is better to take more time rather than jump quickly to a solution that is not entirely satisfactory.

- While the IEP team is together, talk through the student's daily or weekly schedule. Discuss the best timing for special education services. Ask each specialist to describe how he or she plans to implement the student's IEP objectives. Identify any areas of concern and problem solve to avoid scheduling conflicts or other problems. Identify how the parent will be involved in the child's program. Discuss how the team will share information and progress.

Developing an effective IEP is an art. View the IEP as a flexible plan that reflects collective knowledge of the child's learning needs. Getting frequent feedback about how things are going and adjusting the IEP accordingly helps each child reach his or her potential.

An Educator

There is no substitute for individual planning as you move through the special education process. Different issues arise at different times. Use a parent support network and other family members and friends to help you overcome specific hurdles.

A Parent

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Special education services include specially designed instruction, necessary related services, supplemental aids and services, and other accommodations to help special education students access the general education curriculum. Every eligible student has the basic right, guaranteed by state and federal laws, to a free appropriate public education designed to meet his or her unique educational needs.

Special education services must be provided at no cost to the child or parent for all eligible children aged 3 to 21. Although school districts are not required to provide services to infants and toddlers with disabilities, many provide early intervention services under Part C regulations.

Specially Designed Instruction

Specially designed instruction is organized and planned instruction activities which adapt, as appropriate, the content, methodology or delivery of instruction to the needs of the individual student so that the student can access the general curriculum and meet the educational standards that apply to all students.

Students with disabilities may receive a range of specially designed instruction, including but not limited to the following:

- Classroom instruction.
- Physical education instruction.
- Speech and language instruction.
- Physical and occupational therapy.
- Orientation and mobility instruction.
- Behavioral intervention instruction.
- Audiological services.
- Vocational education.
- Transition services.

The terms "modification" and "adaptation" are used to refer to changes in teaching practice or learning goals that allow special education students access to general education curriculum.

Paraeducators in special education are teaching assistants that fill a critical role in delivering special education services. Paraeducators may attend to physical and emotional needs and facilitate friendships for students with disabilities. Under the direct supervision of a special education or general education teacher, paraeducators may deliver specially designed instruction through the IEP. The IEP is designed and monitored by special education certificated staff. Progress on the IEP is monitored and evaluated to measure progress toward specific objectives listed on the student's IEP.

Related Services

Related services are supportive services that allow a student to benefit from special education. Related services may include classified staff services, medical services, parent counseling and training, psychological services, recreation, rehabilitation counseling services, school health services, social work service in schools, and transportation. Other developmental, corrective, preventative or supportive services are allowed if they are required to assist the special education student to benefit from special education. Any necessary related services, supplementary aids and services, and program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the student must be listed on the IEP.

Supplementary Aids and Services

Supplementary aids and services refer to aids, services, and other supports that are provided in general education classes or other education settings that allow special education students to be educated with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate. Assistive technology devices, which include any equipment or products that maintain or improve a student's capabilities, are examples of such services. Accommodations include, but are not limited to, extended time for completing projects; use of calculator or tape recorder to complete assignments; use of additional support staff, scribes, interpreters, or sign language.

Extended School Year (ESY) Services

The IEP team considers the student's need for services beyond the traditional 180-day school year. ESY services are provided when an IEP team determines that services are necessary for the provision of FAPE to a student. School districts develop their own procedures for determining a student's need for these services. Some considerations for ESY may include regression (loss of skills), educational benefit to meet annual goals, professional judgment, health factors, and past history. The student's need for ESY must be determined annually on an individual basis by members of the IEP team. ESY services are addressed on the IEP.

Accommodations Under Section 504

In addition to the rights guaranteed by IDEA, another federal law supports the use of accommodations. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a broad federal law that applies not only to schools, but all federally funded agencies. Section 504 protects people's rights to participate and receive benefits without discrimination resulting from a disability. Some students do not qualify for special education, but they have physical or mental impairments that substantially limit one or more major life activities, including learning, and they may be eligible for 504 plans. For more information, contact the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (see Appendix E).

What to Expect

Families	Educators
List accommodations in the IEP. Most children with disabilities will spend at least part of their school day in a general education classroom. They may require accommodations to do so, such as changes in the environment by moving closer to the front of the class, larger print, or use of calculator. Make sure that these accommodations are listed in the child's IEP.	**Ongoing training needs.** Teachers and paraeducators benefit from ongoing inservice training and support to make the range of special education-necessary related services and accommodations work smoothly. School districts, educational service districts, and professional organizations offer many helpful classes.
Changes in services as children grow. Parents often are surprised that school services differ so much from early intervention or medical facility services. The early medical model focuses on physical and developmental rehabilitation, and thus addresses all areas of a child's disability. In contrast, public education focuses on how the child's disability affects his or her learning and provides services for the child's education. School districts, educational service districts, and professional organizations offer many helpful classes and workshops to help parents and educators understand special education services.	**Share teaching strategies.** General education and special education teachers can learn a great deal from each other, as well as from parents. General education teachers know about the general curriculum and classroom management. Special education teachers know how to assess student progress and individualize instruction for students with disabilities. Parents know what has worked for their child in the past, and what works or does not work at home. Students benefit when services combine the strengths of all sources of expertise.
Extended school year services. The IEP team will discuss your child's need for extended school year services at the IEP meeting. Be sure to bring any information to the annual IEP meeting that might help document your child's need for such services.	

Questions to Ask

Families	Educators
Q. What supports, modifications, and/or accommodations does my child need to be in the general education classroom?	**Q.** What supports and/or accommodations have worked well for the student in the past? Are there strategies that do not work well for the student?
Q. Does my child's IEP list all the services he or she will receive and accommodations he or she will have in the classroom?	**Q.** Where are changes needed to align the student's IEP with the EALRs?
Q. What criteria does the district follow to determine the need for ESY services?	**Q.** If the student has received services from paraeducators in special education, what insights do the paraeducators offer about the student's learning needs?
Q. Will my child participate in state and district assessments? If so, what accommodations may be needed? If not, how will he or she be assessed?	

Things to Do Together

One of the ways that schools can implement IDEA and Washington's school reform efforts is by developing performance goals for students with disabilities and including these goals in the student's IEP. The essential academic learning requirements (EALRs) provide descriptions of the academic knowledge and skills students will be required to meet in the classroom. Special education services aim to help students with disabilities meet the EALRs. Here are some student support strategies:

- Paraeducators in special education are critical personnel in providing special education services. They use individualized instruction (which is designed and monitored by certified special education teachers) to provide a special education student with access to general education curriculum. Their input to teacher planning is invaluable. Regularly scheduled meetings among paraeducators and special education and general education teachers dramatically increase the effective use of these paraeducators.

- Include other related staff, such as speech and language pathologists, physical and occupational therapists, and mental health workers in team meetings to the greatest extent possible. These meetings may be used to review specific student programs, develop and adjust instructional programs, train paraeducators, and address other issues and staff concerns.

It is continually a challenge for me to allow time for problems to work themselves out and not feel that I must find the solution. I am learning to give teachers ownership by saying "I don't know, what do you think?" and to communicate that I trust them to find a solution.

A Parent

A student with a disability is growing in ways that, at times, seems slow compared to other students. Yet, in actuality, we know that all students grow at different rates.

An Educator

PLACEMENT AND LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

In the context of the least restrictive environment (LRE), placement refers to the setting(s) where a student may be taught. Placement is based on the unique needs and abilities of the student and must be in the LRE appropriate for the student's needs. The least restrictive environment concept allows a student with a disability to participate as fully as possible with nondisabled peers. A student with a disability should attend the neighborhood school and be a member of the classroom that she or he would normally attend, unless the student's needs require some other arrangement. Placement is determined based on the student's IEP, the least restrictive environment requirements, and the location that provides a reasonably high probability of assisting the student to achieve his or her annual goals. The IEP team makes placement decisions at the IEP meeting.

All districts have a continuum of placement options available to provide special education services for eligible special education students. Many students can be educated in a general education classroom with appropriate supplementary aids and services. In some situations, such as with a medically fragile child whose life may be threatened by exposure to common diseases, home or hospital instruction may be the least restrictive environment.

Teachers individualize instruction and expected results to help the student succeed. Special education services may be delivered in the classroom by special education personnel or specially trained staff. For example, a paraeducator may help a student in the general education classroom with the same subject that other students are learning. An interpreter may use sign language in the general education classroom for a student who is hearing impaired. Sometimes students receive services outside the class for part of the school day. For example, a student may go to a resource room to receive speech therapy services or individualized reading services several times per week.

Some special education students require major modification to the curriculum or teaching strategies. These students may attend a separate class for most of the school day. These special classes are often called "self-contained classrooms." The separate class often is located in a building where classes are held for general education students so that the student can still participate as a member of the school community.

When the school district determines that it cannot provide FAPE or special education for the student in its schools, contractual arrangements may be made for placement elsewhere. These arrangements may include services in another school district or in a nonpublic agency such as a residential treatment center or a private school. Any nonpublic agency that is contracted for special education services must first be approved by the State Board of Education.

What to Expect

Families	Educators
Consider your child's placement needs. Your child's placement will be reviewed at least one time during every school year. The review is done at the IEP meeting. When a child's needs have changed, you need not wait for an annual review to consider placement changes. Anyone, including parents, can request an IEP meeting to discuss the need for changes in a child's placement.	**Incorporate new teaching strategies.** Including more students with disabilities in the general classroom provides opportunities for a wide range of instructional strategies, including peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and reciprocal teaching. These and other strategies allow a class to work together toward a common goal without making everyone do the same activity.
Share your insights about all your child's needs. Talk with school staff about how placement decisions will improve your child's access to community resources for education, cultural connections, and extracurricular interests. Placement also should support your child's emotional and social development through opportunities for friendship with all peers.	**Arrange classroom space well.** Educators report that careful planning and room arrangement support the range of abilities they typically see in their classrooms. When done well, these same strategies can be adapted to include students with disabilities in the classroom.

Questions to Ask

Families	Educators
Q. How does the learning environment affect my child's behavior and learning?	**Q.** Is the student benefiting from his or her current placement?
Q. What are my child's placement options and the advantages and disadvantages of such placements?	**Q.** How does the student respond to changes in schedule or routine?
Q. How will my child's placement provide interaction with peers without disabilities?	**Q.** Does the placement provide the opportunity to learn?

Things to Do Together

The following are ideas about how parents and educators can work together to make good placement decisions and support special education students in least restrictive environments.

- Talk about environments that best engage and motivate the student. Does the student work well when there are competing distractions, or does she or he need quiet time to focus on tasks and learning?

- Communicate and plan together. Educators report that the key ingredients for successful placement are opportunities for regular communication and planning sessions among all team members, including parents, who work with special education students.

- Behavior issues can be one of the toughest areas to assess when placing special education students. Parents and school staff should discuss school rules and decide to what extent the student will be held accountable for his or her behavior. Together parents and school staff should develop a behavior plan, based on a functional assessment, which identifies the interventions that will be used at home and at school to help the student develop appropriate behaviors for his or her age.

- A wide range of diversity exists in all classrooms today. Take time to talk about how well the school takes ownership of all its students. Identify strategies for strengthening inclusion of all students in the school.

- Teach all students about people with disabilities—they will all benefit from learning about others. Many teaching aids are available, including videos and materials for schoolwide presentations. When a special education student joins the class, invite that student or someone knowledgeable about the disability to speak with the class and answer questions.

It's not the absence of or resistance to innovations in schools that causes problems, but rather the pressure of too many uncoordinated changes. Weaving inclusion into other change agendas is imperative.

An Educator

TRANSITION SERVICES

Transition is the adjustment that individuals make as they change from one stage of development or activity to another. All students benefit from extra support during times of transition. Transition services describe the individualized help a special education student and his or her family receive to prepare for and adjust more easily to new situations, surroundings, and/or expectations. The goal is to make changes flow as smoothly as possible for the student.

The terms "transition" and "transition services" commonly are used in three ways:

Adjustment to change. Transition is used is to describe adjustment to changes that special education students experience (1) as a part of their school day or (2) from year to year. Some students need help with transitions during the school day, such as changing from group activities to quiet study, or from recess to classroom activities. Another transition is the student's adjustment to a new school year. Transition planning is especially important when the student begins a new level of school (such as changing from elementary school to middle school) or attending a new campus. Another example of this kind of transition is a change brought on by a family move that requires the student to attend a new school. In each of these examples, transition services help the special education student with a disability adjust to new activities, surroundings, and/or routine.

Whenever possible, the student and his or her family should be involved in planning for transitions. Students benefit from talking about new situations and expectations, such as the school they will be attending or new services they will receive. Parents and school staff can work together to think through potential rough spots for the student and identify ways they can make the changes rewarding. All students tend to adjust to changes more easily when they know what to expect and help plan and prepare for their new setting.

Transition within early childhood programs. Transition within early childhood programs refers to the planning and supports provided when a young child leaves a program and enters another program. Transition is the process of change within/between programs that involves children, families, caregivers, and service providers. Transition services ensure that the child and family continue to receive services during the change in programs and education providers.

Examples of the various programs in Washington State that a child may transition between include the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program, Head Start, Early Head Start, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), special education programs, kindergartens, Title I, private or public preschools, and child care programs. Transition can also refer to the changes experienced by children receiving different services at the same time (e.g., preschool special education services in the morning and child care in the afternoon).

Children who qualify for early intervention services between the ages of birth to 3 must be evaluated prior to age 3 in order to determine eligibility for special education and related services. A transition conference is required for children transitioning from an early intervention program into a preschool special education program. This conference is to occur at least 90 days before the child's third birthday. The school district is responsible for participating with the family in the transition conference arranged by the early intervention provider. The purpose is to plan the evaluation process. This plan needs to support the child and family during the transition.

If the child is determined eligible for special education services, the transition process includes the development of an individualized education program (IEP). If transitioning from an early intervention program to a school district special education program, an IEP must be developed by the child's third birthday. For children with summer birthdays, the IEP team will determine when the services begin (usually at the beginning of the new school year). Services must be based on the child's individual needs. The IEP specifies the services the child will receive, as well as the setting(s) in which services are received. Specially designed instruction must be provided in a setting with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate.

Secondary transition services. Secondary transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a special education student that is designed to help students move successfully from high school to postschool activities.

Beginning at age 14, or earlier if appropriate, the student must be invited to attend the IEP meeting. The student should participate in identifying his or her transition service needs, which must be included in the IEP. When the student reaches age 16, or sooner, if appropriate, needed transition services are initiated and included as goals in the IEP. At least one year before a student reaches age 18, the IEP must include a statement that the student has been informed of his or her rights that will transfer to the student on reaching the age of majority.

The transition plan must include a coordinated set of activities that address the student's individual needs, preferences, and interests:

1. **Specially designed instruction.** Instruction addresses the skills needed for postschool life, ranging from basic life skills to college/community college preparation, depending on the student's desires and abilities.

2. **Related services.** Related services are those additional supports needed to implement the transition processes and instruction.

3. **Community experiences.** The transition plan identifies a wide range of skill-building and interest assessment experience which can be provided outside the school building. Examples include participating in job training programs; practicing banking, shopping, and using transportation services; meeting with adult service providers; visiting independent living centers and recreational services; and touring and applying to colleges/community colleges.

4. **Developing employment, postschool, and other adult living objectives.** The transition plan lists steps that the student will take that lead to a job, career, school, or other community participation. It also includes taking steps to establish important adult activities, such as registering to vote, accessing medical services, and applying for adult disability services.

And, when appropriate:

5. **Daily living skills.** Tasks that adults do every day, such as preparing meals and paying bills.

6. **Functional vocational evaluation.** An evaluation of skills and interests that is practical and helps the student and his or her family learn more about the student's job and career interests and aptitudes, identify postschool goals, and help determine the student's course of study or vocational involvement.

7. **Interagency responsibilities or needed linkages.** These linkages might include the Social Security Administration and, within the Department of Social and Health Services, the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health Division, and the Vocational and Rehabilitation Division.

What to Expect

Families	Educators
Share strategies. Trade tips with your child's teacher about strategies that will help your child make smooth transitions. Because of your different perspectives, you can offer each other important insights about your child. You can also ensure that your child is getting consistent messages about what to expect in the new situation.	**Be positive about what's ahead.** Help students and families prepare for transitions by telling them about what they can expect. Point out how their new situation will be similar to and different from what they know now. By showing a positive attitude, you can help student look forward to new situations.
Involve your child. Experience has shown that students benefit tremendously from being involved in planning their transition services—at any age.	**Meet with staff from sending or receiving programs/class.** Meet with staff from the student's previous program to become aware of student's routines, schedules, activities, etc. If the student is transitioning into another setting, meet with staff of receiving program and share student's interests, activities, and accomplishments.
Visit the new school. Before your child starts a new school or moves to a new setting, visit the school with your child. Have staff give you and your child a tour and tell you about the routine your child can expect. If possible, meet the child's new teacher(s). Let the child practice new skills and behaviors that will be expected (with assistance, when appropriate) such as carrying a lunch tray or opening a locker that has a combination lock.	**Prepare students to participate in IEP meetings.** Explain what an IEP is and go over the student's current IEP with him or her. Give students concrete examples of what information might go in each section. Roleplay an IEP meeting. Take the student role and model questions, ideas, and behavior. Then give the student time to rehearse what he or she will talk about and how he or she will act at his or her IEP meeting.

What to Expect

Families	Educators
Seek input from many people. People who know your child well can help you learn about your child's interests and aptitudes. Sometimes someone outside your family who has worked with your child, such as a church member or scout leader, can offer new insights about your child's interest and skills.	**Help the student develop a strong transition plan.** Invite service providers, family members, and community members to attend a transition planning meeting. In the plan, identify how each person can help the student strengthen his or her connections in the community.
	Encourage open and honest discussion. Work to facilitate discussion between parents and students about their hopes and dreams as well as their fears. When both the hopes and fears are expressed, the transition plan is more likely to be successful and practical.

*Transition is difficult for many students. I remind myself that middle school, for example, was hard for **all** of my students.*

A Parent and Educator

Questions to Ask

Families	Educators
When Planning Preschool Transitions	***When Planning Preschool Transitions***
Q. May I visit the new school with my child and see the classroom and meet school staff that will be working with my child?	**Q.** How does your child usually respond to changes in routine?
Q. What type of information will be shared my child's current teachers with the new program's staff?	**Q.** What are your child's interests, likes, dislikes, style of learning?
Q. What changes in daily routine can my child expect?	**Q.** Do you have any questions or concerns about your child's new schedule?
Q. Are there parents whose children have experienced similar transitions who I can talk to?	**Q.** Does your child have an older sibling or a friend who would like to participate in a visit to the new school?
When Planning School-to-Work Transitions	***When Planning School-to-Work Transitions***
Q. How best can my child and I participate in transition planning?	**Q.** Ask student of his or her needs, interests, preferences.
Q. How can I learn about local services that might help my child?	**Q.** What are your student's needs, interests, and preferences for postschool adult living?
Q. How can I incorporate what my child wants to do into a realistic job?	**Q.** What information do you need to help you plan for current and future needs?

Things to Do Together

The following tips for preparing children for transition are adapted from *Planning for Transition to Postschool Life*, Florida Department of Education, Division of Public Schools, Bureau of Student Services and Exceptional Education, 1996.

Preparing young people for transition to adult life is a gradual process. Families and educators alike have many hopes for the child's future. No doubt families and educators expect and want to help the young person become a productive member of society. Even if the young person is not old enough to participate in job training or develop independent living skills, there is a lot that families and educators can do now. Here are some suggestions to consider as the child grows up.

Early Childhood

- Encourage the child to strive for early independence.
- Involve the child in activities that foster self-respect, self-esteem, and self-determination.
- Take the child into the community. Point out community members and talk about what they do.
- Show the child how much you enjoy your own work.

Elementary School

- Encourage the child to dress and groom appropriately and to take care of his or her own self-care or cleanliness needs.
- Assign the child specific duties around the house or classroom. Insist that he or she do them thoroughly and on time.
- Involve the child in the community; locate workers, with or without disabilities, as role models. Discuss what the worker is doing and encourage the child to talk about what job he or she might like to do.
- Learn about state regulations dealing with the education of students with disabilities.
- Actively participate in the child's IEP meetings.
- Include social and community skills and career development activities in the IEP.

Middle School

- Actively participate in IEP meetings and request that the student participate in vocational testing.
- Address vocational education, career exploration, job exploration, and awareness training in the IEP.
- Identify community services such as developmental disabilities services, vocational rehabilitation, and agencies that provide job training and placements.
- Help prepare the student to participate in community programs by taking him or her to visit various community service programs.
- Visit work and independent living programs to identify what will be available when the student leaves school.
- Monitor progress toward goals by talking with other team members and the student.
- Talk to other families and educators who have gone through the transition process with a special education student. Find out what has been helpful to them.
- Help prepare the student to learn good self-advocacy skills.

High School

- Develop a plan to increase independence. Let the student make decisions and take reasonable risks.
- Encourage the student to become involved in community activities and increase his or her circle of friends.
- Attend the IEP and transition plan meetings with the student. Family, community service provider, and school staff involvement are essential.
- Address employment training at actual work sites in the transition plan.
- Encourage the student to find paid or volunteer employment in the community.
- Teach the student to use public transportation independently.
- Consult/encourage families to consult legal experts about financial planning, guardianship, and estate planning, when appropriate.

- If not already eligible, encourage the student to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) prior to the student's 18th birthday.

- Introduce the student to people with disabilities who are successfully employed.

All parents feel a twinge when their child is about to make a transition from the comfortable elementary school environment to the uncertainty of junior high or middle school. Part of the issue is biological; part of it is the community feeling that junior high is a tough place to be. What we found was the easiest school transition we have ever experienced. It began the previous spring with meetings including all involved parties (principals, staff, parents) to discuss concerns, needs, and desires for our son. When the school year began, staff initiated phone calls to us giving feedback how our son was doing and how much they were enjoying him.

A Parent

PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

Procedural safeguards provide parents of special education students, surrogate parents, and adult students a full explanation of their educational rights. Procedural safeguards give parents and school staff a set of tools to help them solve problems and settle disagreements about the educational program of a student who has a disability. Procedural safeguards are available at the OSPI website, www.k12.wa.us/specialed/document.asp and available from your school district.

Procedural safeguards must be given to you by the school district anytime you ask for a copy **and:**

- The first time your child is referred for a special education evaluation.
- With each notification of an IEP meeting.
- Each time your child is reevaluated.
- If you request a due process hearing.
- When the school district takes disciplinary action that is a change in placement for your child.

A full explanation of procedural safeguards can be obtained by contacting your local school district, where a number of people can answer questions about your student's program. You may contact your student's general or special education teacher, the school principal, or the district's special education director. **Some** of the highlights of procedural safeguards are described in the following paragraphs. Please refer to *Notice of Procedural Safeguards for Special Education Students and Their Families* for a full explanation.

Parent participation in meetings. Parents are given opportunities to be involved in any meetings about the identification, evaluation, educational placement of the student and other matters relating to the student's free appropriate public education. A meeting does not include informal or unscheduled conversations involving school district personnel on issues such as teaching methodology, lesson plans, or coordination of service provision if those issues are not addressed on the IEP. A meeting also does not include preparatory activities that school personnel engage in to develop a plan or response to a parent proposal that will be discussed at a later meeting.

Prior written notice. School districts must provide parents with written notice each time they propose or refuse to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, placement, or provision of FAPE to a special education student. This means that when the school makes a decision, they must notify the parents of the decision and the basis for the decision, including the factors they considered in making the determination. If the decision involves a change, the notice must occur a reasonable time before the change is made.

Parent consent. Consent means that the parent understands all information about the activity for which the consent is requested. School districts must get a parent's written consent for evaluation, initial placement in special education, and for reevaluation (with certain exceptions) of a student. Consent is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time. However, if an activity or service has already started, the revocation is not retroactive.

A Problem Solving Process

The following information identifies several steps that families and educators can take to address disagreements they may have about a student's educational program.

Seek local solutions. When parents and school staff do not agree about the educational program for a special education student, the parent may want to request a new IEP meeting. The meetings should occur when either the parents or district believe review is appropriate to adjust the services on the IEP.

If differences cannot be resolved, procedural safeguards give parents and schools several options for making decisions about an educational program for a special education student.

Mediation. Mediation is a voluntary process to help parents and school personnel work out their disagreements about a student's educational program. A trained, neutral mediator helps both parents and school personnel clarify issues. When mediation is successful, parents and the district develop mutually acceptable agreements about the educational program for the special education student. Mediation is more structured than a conference, but less formal than a due process hearing.

Mediation services in Washington State are provided by an independent contractor. Mediation is an alternative to starting a due process hearing, but it cannot be used to deny or delay a due process hearing. There is no charge for mediation services. For more information about special education mediation services, call Sound Options Mediation and Training Group, L.L.C., (800) 692-2540, or Washington State Relay Service, (800) 833-6388 (TTY), (800) 833-6384 (voice).

Citizen's complaint. A citizen's complaint may be filed when a person or organization believes that a school district or other public agency has violated state or federal special education laws or regulations. The complaint must be in writing, signed, and filed with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. The complaint will be investigated and a written decision reached within 60 calendar days after the complaint is received unless exceptional circumstances require an extension of the timeline.

Due process hearing. A due process hearing is a legal action that addresses disagreements between parents and educators regarding the identification, evaluation, placement, and provision of FAPE. The due process hearing is conducted by an impartial (neutral) administrative law judge who will make a decision on the case. Parents and school districts are usually represented by lawyers who know special education law. Both parties have the right to appeal the decision to a state or federal court within 30 calendar days of the decision.

A reference is *Information about Dispute Resolution Mechanisms for Special Education Students: Mediation, Citizen's Complaints and Due Process,* May 2001 (see Appendix A).

Another Complaint Mechanism

Discrimination complaint. Anyone who believes that an educational institution that receives federal financial assistance has discriminated against a person with a disability may file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR). A complaint must be filed within 180 days of the alleged discrimination unless the time for filing is extended by OCR for good cause.

Access and Limitations to Sharing Information

Access to educational records. Parents have the right to review all educational records kept by the school district about their child as guaranteed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). When a parent requests such information, the district must provide it before any meeting about the child's IEP, due process hearing, or in any other event, no later than 45 calendar days after the request is received. If parents find an educational record is inaccurate or misleading or violates the privacy or other rights of the student, they may request changes or corrections. Schools and education agencies must promptly respond to these requests and have a process for a hearing in the event that the school and parents disagree. Parents can view educational records at the school and the district may provide copies of educational records. A fee to cover the cost of copying may be charged.

Confidentiality. FERPA also protects confidentiality. A parent's consent is usually needed before personally identifiable information is given to others. There are **several** exceptions to this rule and only two are listed here. One exception is when state school district personnel need the information with a legitimate educational interest in reviewing the record. Generally school officials have legitimate educational interest if they need to review an educational record to fulfill their educational responsibilities to the student. Another exception is when records are transferred to a school district where the student intends to enroll. These are not the only exceptions.

Discipline[2]

Discipline procedures vary depending on the situation, so this is a **very brief** overview of discipline and is not a substitute for reading the regulations addressing discipline. There may be times when special education students receive disciplinary sanctions. However, students must not be disciplined for behavior that is related to their disability. Education services must be provided when a student is removed from school for more than ten school days. Schools must also follow the general education discipline procedures. Some of the special education discipline examples are described in the following paragraphs.

Suspension or expulsion. Schools can remove a student for up to ten school days (at a time) for any violation of school rules as long as there is not a pattern to the removal. In addition, a student with a disability cannot be suspended long term or expelled for behavior that is a manifestation of his or her disability (except for drugs and weapons). After any removal or removals that total more than ten days, the school must provide education services.

Removal for drugs or weapons. School personnel may place a student in an interim alternative educational placement for up to 45 calendar days when a student with a disability possesses or carries a weapon to school or a school function, knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs, or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance while at school or a school function. The removal is allowed regardless of whether the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability.

Removal for dangerous behavior. Schools may request a due process hearing and request that an administrative law judge (ALJ) remove a student from his or her current placement to an interim alternative placement for up to 45 calendar days if the school believes the student is likely to harm himself or herself or others. This administrative hearing process may be repeated for additional 45 calendar day periods under very limited circumstances. When the student requires an interim alternative educational setting because of dangerous behavior, school personnel will propose that setting in consultation with the special education teacher. Schools may also request through a court action a removal for dangerous behavior.

Providing educational services. Schools do not have to provide educational services to a special education student for the first ten school days the student is removed if the school would not provide services to a student without disabilities. After ten school days, schools must always provide education services to a special education student. The procedure for determining what is appropriate depends on the specifics of the disciplinary situation.

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[2] Department of Education. 1999. IDEAS that Work. IDEA '97 Final Regulations Major Issues. Online www.ed.gov/Offices/OSERS/OSEP/Policy/

Functional behavioral assessments and behavior plans. If the school did not already conduct a functional behavior assessment and implement a behavior plan for the student before the misconduct occurred, the IEP team must meet to develop an assessment plan. This meeting must be held no later than ten business days after either first removing the student for ten school days in a school year or no later than ten business days after a removal that is considered a change in placement. As soon as practical after developing the assessment plan and completing the assessments, the IEP team will meet to develop appropriate behavior interventions and implement them.

If the student who is removed from school already has a behavior intervention plan in his or her IEP, then the IEP team must review the plan and its implementation. If necessary, the IEP team will modify that plan and its implementation to address the behavior.

Manifestation of disability determination when a disciplinary action involves a change of placement. Immediately if possible, but no later than ten school days after the decision to change the student's placement, the school must conduct a review of the relationship between the student's disability and the behavior subject to disciplinary action. The review must be conducted by the IEP team and other qualified personnel in a meeting. The review team must determine whether, in light of the behavior subject to discipline:

- The IEP and placement were appropriate and provided consistently.
- The student's disability did not impair the student's ability to understand the impact and consequences of the behavior.
- The student's disability did not impair the student's ability to control the behavior.

If the team determines that any of the standards were not met, then the misconduct must be considered a manifestation of the student's disability. If the team finds deficiencies in the IEP, placement or implementation of services, it must take immediate action to remedy them.

If the team decides that the misconduct was *not* a manifestation of the disability then the student may be disciplined similarly to students without disabilities. Educational services must continue that will allow the student to appropriately progress in the general curriculum and appropriately advance toward achieving the goals of the student's IEP.

If a disciplinary issue is addressed in an expedited due process hearing, the hearing decision must be issued within 45 days of the request for hearing. Timelines for providing evidence are also shortened.

A reference is *OSPI Special Education Technical Assistance Paper (TAP 2),* June 1999. "The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Discipline Procedures Under IDEA Regulations."
http://www.k12.wa.us/specialed/tap/TAP2.pdf (Appendix A).

What to Expect

Families	Educators
Understand your rights. Parents receive a copy of special education procedural safeguards when they are notified that the district intends to take disciplinary action that constitutes a change of placement (WAC 392-172-307). The information provides a full explanation of rights. Procedural safeguards are available in alternative languages and formats, on request.	**Protecting student rights.** In addition to the special education procedures, districts must also follow general education disciplinary procedures.
Expressing your concerns. Parents often have strong emotional reactions when issues arise. These feelings are normal and understandable. Unfortunately, expressing concerns in emotional ways may fuel misunderstandings. Experience suggests that it helps to identify the reasons behind emotional reactions. Ask someone who is not directly involved to help sort the issues from the emotions.	**Be sensitive in using authority.** Unnecessary displays of authority or expertise may alienate parents and colleagues. Being sensitive to the student and family is critical for effective problem solving.
Document your actions. Write down dates, times, and actions. Follow conversations with a note or letter to clarify what you, as a parent, understand has been said.	**Give parents time to think things through.** School staff report that a common weakness among educators is jumping too quickly to try to "fix things." When educators move right away to "an answer," parents may feel that their concerns have not been heard or suggestions not considered. Thus, without necessarily meaning to, educators' desire to find a solution may contribute to a breakdown in communication.

Questions to Ask

Families	Educators
Q. Who can make a decision about my concern for my child's educational program?	**Q.** Do you have any questions about procedural safeguards that I can help you understand?
Q. What other options can we consider to meet my child's needs?	**Q.** What specifically do you want to change in your student's educational program?
Q. Who else might be able to help me understand these issues?	**Q.** Have you received information on disabilities, websites, training opportunities, etc.?

Perhaps ... you don't feel you are making any progress and more barriers continue to rise. Reviewing the process from the beginning may shed some light. Did you inadvertently alienate someone or possibly misunderstand what happened at a meeting? It's important to clarify key points along the way to decrease misunderstandings, and it's never too late to mend fences. Not guessing and overreacting, but rather, clarifying and troubleshooting works best.

A Parent

Things to Do Together

Some problems can be solved quickly. Others will take more time and effort. If there is disagreement between parents and school staff, try these steps to resolve the problem:

- Make sure that parents and school staff understand each other's concerns and perspectives about the student's educational program. Ask for clarification and give examples to make sure you understand each other. Many issues can be resolved informally when parents and school staff state their concerns and what they want for the student more specifically and clearly.

- Use an agenda when you meet to help everyone stay focused.

- Find out who has the power to make decisions about the problem. Talk to that person about the problem. Work together and be open to each other's ideas and suggestions.

- Identify areas of agreement as well as disagreement. Sometimes expanding or identifying what is working in the areas of agreement can help identify solutions for areas of disagreement as well.

- Use flip chart paper to keep notes so that everyone can see what each person said. Use a "parking lot" sheet for issues that should wait for another meeting.

Remember to take time to build relationships and leave room for empathy on both sides: The school district is not always wrong and parents are not always unrealistic.

An Educator

Finally, don't forget to thank each other now and then even when there are differences of opinion. Show appreciation for hard work.

A Mediator

APPENDIX A

PRODUCTS AVAILABLE FROM OSPI SPECIAL EDUCATION

The following products are available through the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. They may be accessed through the OSPI Special Education home page at *www.k12.wa.us/specialed*. You will find important announcements, most special education publications, staff directory, Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) information, links, events, and much more. To request a hard copy of publications, call (360) 725-6075 or TTY at (360) 586-0126, or e-mail at *speced@ospi.wednet.edu*. One copy per request. Most documents are also available on computer disk. Please specify platform and preferred software program when requesting materials on disk.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Handbook

Information about Dispute Resolution Mechanisms for Special Education Students: Mediation, Citizen's Complaints and Due Process

Evaluation and Assessment in Early Childhood Special Education: Children Who Are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

Guidelines for Participation and Testing Accommodations for Special Populations on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)

Identification of Students with Specific Learning Disabilities— State of Washington Severe Discrepancy Tables

Mediation in Special Education (Brochure or Booklet)

Ninth Annual Report of Special Education Services in Washington State

Non-Public Agency Application

Orientation Level Training for School Employees Who Administer Oral Medications to Students

Post-School Status Report, 2001 Special Education Graduates

Notice of Procedural Safeguards for Special Education Students and Their Families
(also available in Cambodian, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese)

Productive Learning in a Safe Environment for Each Child

Report for Behaviorally At-Risk Students

Special Education and Institutional Education Directory
(updated annually)

Special Education and the Law: A Legal Guide for Families and Educators—What Parents and Educators Should Know About the Laws and Court Decisions That Affect the Education of Students With Disabilities in Washington State

State Forms for Services to Students in Special Education (also available in Cambodian, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese)

State of Washington Rules for the Provision of Special Education to Special Education Students Chapter 392-172 WAC

Task Force on Behavioral Disabilities, Final Report

Technical Assistance Paper No. 1 The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: A Review of the Basics

Technical Assistance Paper No. 2 The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Discipline Procedures Under IDEA Regulations

Technical Assistance Paper No. 3 Questions Regarding Special Education Regulation Changes for Birth to Three Services

APPENDIX B

ACRONYMS

Following is a list of acronyms that may be used in this document or that you may find in reading other materials.

504	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
619	Section 619 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (3 through 5 year olds)
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADD/ADHD	attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
CD	communication disordered
CEC	Council for Exceptional Children
CSPD	Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
DD	developmentally delayed
DDC	Developmental Disabilities Council
DSHS	Department of Social and Health Services
DVR	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
EBD	Emotionally/behaviorally disabled
EDGAR	Education Department General Administrative Regulations
EHA	Education for All Handicapped Children Act
ESD	Educational Service District
FAPE	free appropriate public education
FAS/FAE	fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effect
FEPP	Family/Educator Partnership Project

FTE	full-time equivalent
GEPA	General Education Provisions Act
ICC	Interagency Coordinating Council
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEE	independent educational evaluation
IEP	individualized education program
IFSP	individualized family services plan
ITEIP	Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program
JRA	Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration
LD/SLD	learning disability/specific learning disability
LEA	local educational agency
LEP	limited English proficient
LRE	least restrictive environment
MAA	Medical Assistance Administration
MR	mental retardation
NASDSE	National Association of State Directors of Special Education
NECTAS	National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System
OCR	Office for Civil Rights
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
OSERS	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
OSPI	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
OT	occupational therapist
PAVE	Parents Are Vital in Education

PT	physical therapist
RFP	request for proposals
RRC	regional resource center
SEA	state educational agency
SEAC	Special Education Advisory Council
SETC	Special Education Technology Center
SLP	speech-language pathologist
SOP	state-operated program
TBI	traumatic brain injury
WAEYC/ NAEYC	Washington/National Association for the Education of Young Children
WASA	Washington Association of School Administrators
WEdNet	Washington Education Network
WSD	Washington State School for the Deaf
WSSB	Washington State School for the Blind
WWW	World Wide Web

APPENDIX C

DISABILITY CATEGORIES

Special education and necessary related services are provided to students who meet Washington State eligibility criteria under one of the disability categories defined below. Students must meet specific eligibility criteria for one of these disability categories. For detailed eligibility criteria, refer to WAC 392-172-114 through 392-172-148. In addition, there must be documented an adverse education impact and need for special education and necessary related services because of a student's disability.

Developmentally Delayed. Children aged 3 to 9 who are delayed in cognitive development, communication development, physical development, social or emotional development, and adaptive communication or qualify for one of the other eligibility categories below and are in need of special education and any necessary related services. Children who meet the eligibility requirements who are aged birth to 3 should have access to early intervention services under Part C.

Emotionally/Behaviorally Disabled. Students who exhibit one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree: inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Communication Disordered. Students who have a documented communication disorder such as stuttering, voice disorder, language impairment, and/or impaired articulation which adversely affects a student's educational performance and requires specially designed instruction.

Orthopedically Impaired. Students who lack normal function of muscles, joints, or bones due to congenital anomaly, disease, or permanent injury and such conditions adversely affect educational performance and require specially designed instruction.

Health Impaired. Students who have limited strength, vitality or alertness, including heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, due to chronic or acute health problems, such as a heart condition, rheumatic fever, nephritis, asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, or diabetes, that adversely affect their educational performance and require specially designed instruction.

Specific Learning Disability. Students who have a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using spoken or written language. This may include problems in listening, thinking, speaking, or communicating clearly; reading with comprehension, writing legibly and with meaning, spelling, and accurately performing mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. A learning disability is indicated by a severe discrepancy between the student's intellectual ability and academic achievement.

Mental Retardation. Students demonstrate significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects their educational performance and requires specially designed instruction.

Multiple Disabilities. Students who have two or more disabling conditions, which adversely affects educational performance and requires specially designed instruction, the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness.

Deafness. Students who have a hearing impairment that is so severe that the student is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects their educational performance and requires specially designed instruction.

Hearing Impairment. Students who have a permanent or fluctuating hearing impairment, but is not included under the definition of deafness, whether which adversely affects their educational performance and requires specially designed instruction.

Visually Impaired. Students who have a visual impairment, which even with correction adversely affects the student's educational performance and requires specially designed instruction. The term includes both partial sighted and blindness.

Deaf-Blindness. Students whose hearing and vision impairments, in combination, cause such severe communication and other developmental educational problems that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for students with deafness or blindness. The impairments adversely affect the student's educational performance and require specially designed instruction.

Autism. Students who have a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3 that adversely affects a student's educational performance and requires specially designed instruction. Students in this category have a range of intellectual abilities. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The category of autism includes students with pervasive developmental disorders if the students meet eligibility criteria.

Traumatic Brain Injury. Students who have acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability and/or psychosocial impairment that adversely affects educational performance and requires specially designed instruction.

APPENDIX D

WASHINGTON STATE RESOURCES

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Old Capitol Building
PO Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200

State Superintendent of Public Instruction
(360) 725-6000

OSPI Special Education

Special Education Learning Improvement
(360) 725-6080
Special Education Operations
(360) 725-6075
TTY: (360) 586-0126
Fax: (360) 586-0247
E-mail: speced@ospi.wednet.edu
www.k12.wa.us/specialed

Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC)

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Executive Secretary: (360) 725-6075

Educational Service Districts

Educational Service District 101
1025 W. Indiana Ave.
Spokane, WA 99205-4400
(Adams, Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Lincoln, Spokane, and Whitman Counties)
(509) 456-7086
Fax (509) 456-2999

Educational Service District 105
33 S. Second Ave.
Yakima, WA 98902
(Kittitas, Yakima, part of Grant and part of Klickitat Counties)
(509) 575-2885
Fax (509) 575-2918

Educational Service District 112
2500 NE 65th Ave.
Vancouver, WA 98661-6812
(Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum, part of Klickitat and part of Pacific Counties)
(360) 750-7500
Fax (360) 750-9706

Educational Service District 113
601 McPhee Rd. SW
Olympia, WA 98502-5080
(Grays Harbor, Mason, Lewis, Thurston and part of Pacific Counties)
(360) 586-2933
Fax (360) 586-4658

Educational Service District 123
3918 W. Court St.
Pasco, WA 99301
(Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Walla Walla, Franklin, and Benton Counties; Othello School District)
(509) 547-8441
Fax (509) 546-4372

North Central Educational Service District 171
PO Box 1847
Wenatchee, WA 98807-1847
(Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan and part of Grant Counties)
(509) 665-2610
Fax (509) 662-9027

Northwest Educational Service District 189
205 Stewart Rd.
Mount Vernon, WA 98273-5462
(Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom Counties)
(360) 424-9573
Fax (360) 424-2146

Olympic Educational Service District 114
105 National Ave. N.
Bremerton, WA 98312
(Kitsap County except Bainbridge Island; Jefferson and Clallam Counties; North Mason School District in Mason County)
(360) 479-0993
FAX (360) 478-6869

Puget Sound Educational Service District
400 SW 152nd St.
Burien, WA 98166-2209
(King and Pierce Counties; Bainbridge Island School District in Kitsap County)
(206) 439-3636
FAX (206) 439-3961

State Needs Projects Funded by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Projects funded with federal discretionary monies that benefit the state as a whole or would not otherwise be available in a given region are known as "state needs" projects.

The **Autism Outreach Project** is a statewide system in which the identification, program, development, placement, and staff development activities are coordinated to ensure that all school districts, parents, agencies, and students are appropriately served throughout the state of Washington.

Autism Outreach Project
205 Stewart Rd.
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
(888) 704-9633
www.autism.esd189.org

The **Bates Technical College (BTC) Paraeducator Training Program** addresses an increasing demand by paraeducators for appropriate, accessible, and affordable training. This statewide video-based training program offers the opportunity to earn college credit at home or work and schedule coursework around job and family responsibilities. There are no campus visits or classes to attend. Hundreds of people have availed themselves statewide of this unique educational opportunity.

Bates Technical College
1101 S. Yakima Ave.
Tacoma, WA 98405
(253) 680-7230
(888) 872-7221
www.bates.ctc.edu/paraeducator/para00.htm

The **BEACONS Project** (Behavioral and Emotional Assessment and Curriculum for the Ongoing Needs of Students with or at Risk of Developing Emotional Disturbance) has demonstration sites at elementary schools in the Shoreline, Highline, West Valley, and Evergreen School Districts. These schools are establishing and modeling structures and strategies which help students with challenging behavior as well as those identified as emotionally/behaviorally disabled.

BEACONS
University of Washington Special Education
102 Miller Hall
PO Box 357925
Seattle, WA 98195-3600
(206) 543-1827
www.depts.washington.edu/beacons1

The **Center for Change in Transition Services** is a collaborative effort between OSPI Special Education and the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Center for Change in Transition Services
University of Washington
Experimental Education Unit
PO Box 357925
Seattle, WA 98195
(206) 543-4011
www.depts.washington.edu/ccts/

The **Early Childhood Inclusion Project (WAEYC)** supports school districts and their community programs collaborating to create inclusive early childhood classrooms for children aged 3 to 5. The project provides small planning grants, training, and technical assistance to local collaborative teams.

Early Childhood Inclusion Project
841 N. Central Ave., Suite 206
Kent, WA 98032
(253) 854-2565
www.waeyc.org

The **Family/Educator Partnership Project (FEPP)** serves as an in-state network to increase positive family/educator partnerships for students with disabilities. Coordinators work with families, school districts, and the ESDs to share information and resources and encourage them to work together.

The Arc of Washington State
2600 Martin Way E., Suite D
Olympia, WA 98506
(360) 357-5596
(888) 754-8798
www.arcwa.org

The **Special Education Technology Center (SETC)** is the only project of its kind that allows schools to borrow and evaluate expensive technology, determine its appropriateness for a student, and receive staff development training on the device. The SETC allows all districts to maintain the spirit and the letter of the law. It has three primary strands:

1. Maintain a lending library of hardware and software materials that are loaned to districts to evaluate their long-term benefit for specific children.
2. Training and inservice are available statewide to school districts and parents regarding assistive technology.
3. Technology planning for identified children.

Central Washington University
400 E. 8th Ave.
Mail Stop 7413
Ellensburg, WA 98926
(509) 963-3350
www.cwu.edu/~setc

Washington Sensory Disabilities Services (WSDS) provides information, training, technical assistance, and resources to families and educators statewide regarding individuals from birth to age 21 with sensory disabilities—children and youth who are deaf, hard of hearing, visually impaired, blind or deaf-blind

North Central ESD 171
PO Box 1847
Wenatchee, WA 98807-1847
(509) 665-2618
Voice/TTY: (800) 572-7000
www.wsdsonline.org

The **Washington State Parent-to-Parent** program is a statewide program dedicated to family support. Parent-to-parent programs provide emotional support and information about disabilities and community resources to parents who are just learning about or seeking new information about their child's disability, illness, or chronic health condition. Parent-to-parent programs in Washington State offer unique resources and support based on the needs of their individual communities. Washington State Parent-to-Parent is the umbrella organization that formally networks all 27 community-based parent-to-parent programs in the state.

Washington State Parent-to-Parent
4738 172nd Ct. SE
Bellevue, WA 98006
(425) 641-7504
(800) 831-5927
state2p@earthlink.net

Washington State Special Education Training for All (WSSETA) provides six-hour workshops for staff and parents; each training is facilitated by a parent and an educator. The emphasis is not only on rights and responsibilities but also on building lasting relationships while working as a team. Rules and regulations, state forms, and paraeducator competencies are used in this training. WEA clock hours are available.

Washington Education Association
33434 8th Ave. S.
Federal Way, WA 98003-9985
(253) 588-0637
cperkins2@mindspring.com

Department of Social and Health Services

Information and Referral		(360) 902-8400
Secretary		(360) 902-7800

Children's Administration

Assistant Secretary		(360) 902-7820
Director, Program and Policy		(360) 902-7911
Supervisor, Out-of-Home Services		(360) 902-8020
Director, Licensed Resources		(360) 902-7999

Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS)

Region 1	Spokane	(509) 363-3363
Region 2	Yakima	(509) 575-2641
Region 3	Everett	(425) 339-4776
Region 4	Seattle	(206) 352-2139
Region 5	Tacoma	(253) 983-6258
Region 6	Olympia	(360) 413-3405

Health and Rehabilitative Services Administration

Assistant Secretary	(360) 902-7799
Director, Alcohol and Substance Abuse	(360) 438-8200
Director, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services	(360) 902-8000
Director, Mental Health Division	(360) 902-0790
Child Study Treatment Center	(253) 756-2504
Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation	(360) 438-8008

Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)

Director		(360) 902-8484
Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program		(360) 902-8490
Region 1	Spokane	(509) 458-2063
Region 2	Yakima	(509) 225-7975
Region 3	Everett	(425) 339-4838
Region 4	Seattle	(206) 568-5711
Region 5	Tacoma	(253) 593-2820
Region 6	Olympia	(360) 753-4676

Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration

Assistant Secretary	(360) 902-7804

Medical Assistance Administration

Assistant Secretary	(360) 902-7807

Department of Health

Information and Referral	(360) 236-4501
Secretary	(360) 236-4030
Assistant Secretary, Community and Family Health	(360) 236-3723
Director, Maternal and Child Health	(360) 236-3581
Manager, Children with Special Health Care Needs	(360) 236-3521

Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development

Information and Referral	(360) 725-4000
Director	(360) 725-4000
Assistant Director, Community Services	(360) 725-2911
Managing Director, Children's Services Unit, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)	(360) 725-2829
Developmental Disabilities Planning Council	(360) 586-3558

Department of Services for the Blind

Information and Referral	(360) 586-1224 (800) 552-7103
Director	(360) 586-6981

Schools for the Deaf and Blind

Washington State School
for the Blind (360) 696-6321
2214 E. 13th St.
Vancouver, WA 98661-4120
www.wssb.wa.gov

Washington State School
for the Deaf (360) 696-6525
611 Grand Blvd.
Vancouver, WA 98661-4918
www.wsd.wa.gov

State Disability Organizations

Autism Society of Washington
(360) 943-2205
www.autismsocietyofwa.org

Brain Injury Association of Washington
(800) 523-5438
www.biawa.org

United Cerebral Palsy of Washington
(866) 812-8736
(253) 565-1463
www.ucp-southpugetsound.org

Epilepsy Foundation of Washington
(800) 752-3509
www.epilepsyfoundationwash.org

FAS Family Resource Institute
(800) 999-3429
www.fetalalcoholsyndrome.com

Learning Disabilities Association of Washington
(800) 536-2343
(425) 882-0820
www.ldawa.org

Evergreen Spina Bifida Association
(253) 841-5717

Washington State Tourette Syndrome Association
(206) 781-9035
www.tourette.net/wa

Additional Resources

Client Assistance Program
(206) 721-5996
(800) 544-2121 (in Washington State) TTY
www.wata.org/resource/legal/agencies/cap.htm

Council for Exceptional Children
(253) 571-1096
www.cec.sped.org

Early Childhood Development Association of Washington (ECDAW)
(206) 325-8477
www.boyercc.org

Sound Options Mediation and Training Group, L.L.C.
PO Box 11457
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110-5457
(800) 692-2540

Washington PAVE (Parents Are Vital in Education)
(800) 5-Parent
(253) 565-2266
www.washingtonpave.org

Washington Protection and Advocacy System
(206) 324-1521
www.wpas-rights.org

Washington State Fathers' Network
(Support and Resources for Fathers of Children with Special Needs)
(425) 747-4004, Ext. 218
www.fathersnetwork.org

Washington State PTA
(800) 562-3804
(253) 565-2153
www.wastatepta.org

Washington State Relay Service
(800) 833-6384
(800) 833-6384
TTY: (888) 833-6388

APPENDIX E

NATIONAL RESOURCES

American Association on Mental Retardation
(800) 424-3688
www.aamr.org

American Council for the Blind
(800) 424-8666
www.acb.org

American Foundation for the Blind
(800) 232-5463
www.afb.org

American Society for Deaf Children
(800) 942-2732
www.deafchildren.org

Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA)
(800) 487-2282
www.add.org

Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders (CHADD)
(800) 233-4050
www.chadd.org

Cornucopia of Disability Information (CODI)
www.codi.buffalo.edu/

Down Syndrome Society
(800) 221-4602
www.dss.org

National Down Syndrome Congress
(800) 232-6372
www.ndscenter.org

Family and Advocates Partnership for Education (FAPE)
(888) 248-0822
www.fape.org/

The Family Village
(608) 263-5776
www.familyvillage.waisman.edu

IDEA Partnerships
(877) CEC-IDEA
www.ideapractices.org
Internet Resources for Special Children
www.irsc.org

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
(800) 950-6264
www.nami.org

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System (NEC*TAS)
(919) 962-2001
www.nectas.unc.edu

The National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY)
(800) 695-0285
www.nichcy.org

Office of Special Education Programs
(202) 205-5507
www.ed.gov/offices

Office for Civil Rights
Seattle Office
(206) 220-7900
www.OCR_Seattle@ed.gov

Spina Bifida Association of America
(800) 621-3141
www.sbaa.org

Tourette Syndrome Association
(888-486-8738)
www.tsa-usa.org

United Cerebral Palsy Association
(800) 872-5827
www.ucp.org

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

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